



OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING Livermore, CA

February 25, 2012

STAFF REPORT: Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area Program Overview

STAFF: Bob Williamson, District Superintendent
Joe Ramos, Sector Superintendent
Justin Mynk, Maintenance Supervisor
Clint Elsholz, Environmental Scientist
Elise McFarland, Interpreter I
Jennifer Buckingham-Garcia, Staff Park & Recreation Specialist

SUBJECT: A review of the history of the State Vehicular Recreation Area and current park operations

Summary

The following provides an overview of Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) including visitor services, interpretation and education, resource management, and concession programs.

PARK OVERVIEW

Creation of the Park

The privately owned Carnegie Cycle Park was purchased by the State in 1979 to continue providing existing off highway vehicle (OHV) recreation. Carnegie SVRA opened to the public in 1981.

Park Description

Carnegie SVRA is located in the hills on the border between Alameda and San Joaquin counties between the cities of Livermore and Tracy. The landscape at the park is characterized by dry rocky washes, rolling hills, and steep, rugged canyons rising abruptly out of the floodplain. The park is a distinctive setting for OHV recreation of all skill levels and offers beautiful scenic vistas for trail riding. The SVRA is especially suited for motorcycle use because of its steep hills and narrow trails. The canyons offer a variety of terrain for trail riding, including some extremely challenging hill climbs. Park elevations range from 650 to 1,750 feet above sea level, and the weather is generally a semi-arid Mediterranean type with wet, mild winters and long, dry summers.

History

By the early 1920s early OHV enthusiasts had discovered that the durable clay soils of Corral Hollow were good for OHV recreation. Hillclimbing on early motorcycles was very popular. This activity became a fixture in the canyon, attracting many people to the area. By 1970, Carnegie became a private motorcycle park, known as Carnegie Cycle Park.



Photo courtesy of Dave Duffin

Several major race series had stops at Carnegie Cycle Park. The most notable of these was the Trans AMA series. This international series featured the best racers in the world, including world champions Brad Lackey, Bob Hannah, and Roger DeCoster.

Improvements were made to the park, but increasing insurance costs and operating expenses brought financial hardship to the operation. The park was sold to California State Parks in 1979 for \$1.2 million. The state added to the park a motocross track, a campground, administrative building, maintenance facilities, and a concession store. The park is now home to a number of competitive events, including motocross races, cross country events, and hillclimbs. Currently, the park is the home of the State and National championship hillclimbs held each year.

In addition to the significant recreational opportunities, Carnegie SVRA contains valuable historical resources. Many of those resources are related to important events in California's prehistory. The SVRA lies in the boundary area between two ethnographic Native American groups, the Northern Valley Yokuts and the Ohlone. Two significant prehistoric sites recorded within Corral Hollow Creek include a seasonal campsite and a rock art site, both of which have been excavated by qualified state archaeologists and archaeologists from San Francisco State University. Although there are no major village sites in the SVRA, data collected from the two excavated sites suggests the area was an important seasonal food gathering and hunting area where trading of important goods took place along with religious ceremonies.

In 1855, railroad surveyors discovered coal in Corral Hollow which led to the building of California's first commercial coal mine and the town of Tesla. High quality clay was later found in the area, which led to the construction of the Carnegie Brick and Pottery Company in 1902. Owner John Treadwell named his newest enterprise after a man he admired, philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

A small town of about 350 sprung up that included a hotel, two bunkhouses, a bakery, saloon, slaughterhouse, school, and 17 homes. By 1910 as many as 110,000 bricks a day were being shipped all over California stamped with the name "Carnegie."

Soon issues began to plague the Carnegie operation. The bank that held the mortgage on the Treadwell properties failed. This was followed by floods that destroyed buildings and a boiler room explosion. Despite high demand for brick, by late 1916 the company faced financial ruin, and was sold to Gladding McBean in Lincoln. The new owners destroyed the town's remaining buildings, removed the factory's equipment, and demolished the remainder of the factory. The production equipment is still usable and Gladding McBean is able to produce special runs of "Carnegie bricks" at their Lincoln plant.

Remnants of Carnegie's past, including building foundations, railroad routes, and lime kilns, can still be seen throughout the park today. Carnegie Brick and Pottery Company's legacy continues in buildings built with Carnegie brick and terra cotta such as the Oakland Hotel, the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum, and the Carnegie Libraries in Livermore and Lodi.

Over the next several decades the land went through a series of owners and was primarily used for cattle grazing.

General Park Information

Carnegie SVRA offers a variety of off-highway opportunities on 1,300 acres. This includes multi-use all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and motorcycle roads and trails, hill climb areas, a 4 x 4 play area, and motorcycle and ATV tracks. Five designated creek crossings provide access to trails in the hills.

There are 25 designated campsites at Carnegie, available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Each site is equipped with a picnic table, shade ramada, and fire ring. Showers, flush toilets, and potable water are also available in the campground. Day use facilities are located throughout the park and loading ramps are also available throughout the valley floor.

Carnegie provides one of the only managed OHV riding facilities in the Bay Area and San Joaquin Valley, which is home to approximately 95,000 OHVs registered in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Sonoma and Stanislaus Counties. This total does not reflect highway registered OHVs and 4-wheel drive vehicles.

Carnegie SVRA manages the property for high-quality OHV recreation, and natural and cultural resource values.

VISTOR SERVICES

Concession

Carnegie SVRA administers a concession store contract with MotoMart at Carnegie. Motomart provides very popular and needed services to the visiting public including motorcycle and ATV parts, repairs, and riding apparel; as well as food and drinks.

Motomart works in close partnership with the park on many issues and is extremely responsive to the needs of the public that it serves.

Public Safety Program

Public safety is extremely important at Carnegie SVRA. In addition to public safety contacts to ensure safe and responsible operation of vehicles, visitor services staff are available to respond to medical emergencies.

Rider Safety

Included in the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division-wide effort to promote and improve safety for ATV and motorcycle operators, Carnegie SVRA has developed an ATV Safety Training Program in the District. Park staff began providing training classes in 2007 for park employees and allied agencies. This training ensures compliance with training standards for the operation of ATVs and motorcycles. The park also provides facilities for instructors who offer public classes for both the ATV Safety Institute (ASI) and the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) at a nominal fee. In 2011, over 70 ASI and MSF courses were conducted at Carnegie. Comprehensive ATV and motorcycle safety education programs provide an important opportunity to educate the public on safe and responsible use of OHVs and raise awareness of the park resources. The park also provides a year-round venue for the Off Highway PALS program.

Medical response is a key component of the Carnegie SVRA public safety program. With the steep, remote, and challenging terrain found in the park, a safe and efficient method is necessary to reach, stabilize, and transport patients. A variety of equipment is used in this role, but the most efficient has been an emergency response vehicle purchased several years ago, which provides unprecedented access and care for visitors involved in accidents.



Providing training at minimal or no cost is a critical need. Within the District we have a number of certified instructors who provide training to staff. Carnegie SVRA instructors are in high demand because of their high levels of proficiency and experience. Our instructors also frequently teach at the Department training center. Those costs are paid for by the training center. Training topics include firearms, defensive tactics, emergency medical responder, scenario evaluator, sound testing, ATV safety, and rescue techniques.

Volunteer Assistance

Volunteers provide a valuable and vital addition to the park's Visitor Service staff. During 2011 off-highway patrol volunteers contributed nearly 1,450 hours of service with public safety contacts, special events, rider education, and emergency response. The volunteer program continues to grow with 17 active members making pre-emptive safety and informational contacts regarding park rules and regulations.

Volunteers work alongside park staff to assist with medical aid and scene control. Training is provided to volunteers, including safety, regulatory, and park operations components, keeping volunteers well trained and informed.

INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION, and OUTREACH

In April of 2009 an interpreter was hired to provide educational programs at Carnegie SVRA. Since then, new park interpretive panels and brochures have been developed to support the trails, visitor services, and environmental science programs. Visitors have been educated about park history, the importance of caring for the land on which they recreate, the park's environmental restoration efforts, OHV safety and regulations, and the Storm Water Management Plan.

At Skip's Hillclimb events in the spring and fall park, staff set up a special event interpretive booth. The booth offers information on responsible riding, recreational opportunities, park plants and animals, OHV safety and regulations, and park history. Activities for the kids include a self-guided Junior Ranger program, Litter Getters, a Carnegie coloring book, and wildlife coloring and stamps. In 2010 over the course of four special events, park staff and volunteers spoke with 824 visitors.

In October of 2011 Carnegie held its first annual Visitor Appreciation Day. The special event booth for this event was expanded to include the OHV Division's outreach trailer with the park's rider safety display, Tread Lightly! information table, and games that reinforced the rules for safe riding. Attendance at this event was approximately 1,500 visitors.

The same information available at the special event booth is also available at the Visitor Information Station in the park on weekends. Both of these information booths offer visitors a chance to ask questions of knowledgeable staff about issues affecting the park. In 2010, 360 visitors were contacted through the Visitor Information Station.

Outreach

Carnegie staff provide educational opportunities through school outreach programs. Four programs have been developed and presented at schools in Livermore and Tracy which provide support for the state's curriculum standards.

They are:

- A kindergarten program on local animals that emphasizes similarities and differences
- A first grade life sciences program that discusses adaptation in local animals that helps them survive in their environments
- A third grade local history program that provides sequential information on how humans have impacted the land
- A careers in parks program for high school students

611 students participated in these programs in 2010.

Carnegie staff also participates in local community and historical special events held in Tracy and Livermore. During these events OHV safety, recreation opportunities and regulations are discussed. Recurring events include the Dry Bean Festival in Tracy, the Livermore Motorcycle Safety Awareness event, and participation in the Rubicon Trail program. At community outreach events the park usually makes about 500 contacts per day, with totals in 2011 of about 2,200.

In May of 2011 Carnegie SVRA participated in the celebration of the centennial of Livermore's Carnegie Library. The Carnegie Library in Livermore was built using brick and architectural terra cotta made at the Carnegie Brick and Pottery plant which was located in Corral Hollow Canyon in the early 20th century. This small one day community event gave Carnegie staff a chance to talk about our shared history and current recreational opportunities with Livermore locals.

RESOURCE PROGRAM

Habitat Monitoring System

Carnegie SVRA, like all of the SVRAs, conducts annual Habitat Monitoring System (HMS) monitoring that includes surveys of birds, amphibians, mammals, and vegetation cover. The HMS surveys are vital to understanding the long term status and trends of sensitive plant and animal populations. In the ten plus years of HMS monitoring, park staff have been able to identify many of the breeding locations of the federally protected California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) and California Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) and have identified over 130 bird species in the park.

In 2008, the OHMVR Division partnered with researchers and experts from the U.C. Davis Information Center for the Environment to review the HMS protocols and identify areas in need of improvement. Carnegie SVRA has been on the forefront in researching and testing a new methodology that the panel has suggested. These efforts have resulted in a robust study design that provides an unprecedented examination of biodiversity health within an SVRA. This model is designed to change as we learn more about the resources and recreation of the SVRA. The panel, as well as California State Park's Natural Resource Division, will continue to lend expertise and guidance over the next several years. The natural resource team at Carnegie is excited

about the opportunity to share the results of these studies as these protocols are implemented.

Soil Standard

The soils and trails program at Carnegie SVRA is guided by the OHMVR Division's 2008 Soil Standard. Carnegie SVRA staff utilizes Geographic Information System (GIS) and Global Position System (GPS) technologies to plan projects, store data, and assess trail system conditions. The monitoring of the soils are done annually using photo points which target locations that have the greatest potential for soil loss. Trail assessments are also performed annually to help ensure the integrity of the trail's design. The results of these efforts are summarized in an annual report.

Restoration Program

Every year, Carnegie SVRA implements restoration projects to protect habitat, improve storm water quality, and provide for long term sustainable recreation. This often involves adding soils and seed to very steep hillsides to break hydrological connections and stabilize soils.

For many years, park staff focused on the hot spots within the park. While we had many successes including projects in the southern hills of the park at Rocky Knob and in Dead Cow Canyon, we needed a more systematic approach that included not just rehabilitation but also education and enforcement. In 2008, park managers began developing a park-wide strategic trail plan that outlined an approach that would tie each restoration project into a larger plan. This involved dividing the park into nine large areas, or Resource Management Areas (RMAs), based on watershed characteristics. Each year, park functions, including outreach, education, rehabilitation, and enforcement concentrate within one or two specific RMAs. Under the direction of park managers, the Environmental Scientist, Trails Supervisor, and Park Interpreter collaborate to ensure a sustainable trail system exists while educating the majority of users on the importance of staying on established trails. Off-trail incursions are addressed swiftly so the trail system remains intact. When the restoration of a RMA is complete the restoration of the adjacent RMA will begin until all nine RMAs have been addressed.

This new model is effective for several reasons. The watershed approach allows us to fix any stormwater issues from the top down. This is important because problems uphill can significantly impact areas farther down the watershed. Also, this model allows us to better communicate to the public which trails to use and the importance of staying on established trails. This is partly accomplished by giving tours to the public in areas under renovation. These tours allow us to speak directly to the users about the plans for the area which, in turn, helps shape efforts on the ground. The result of this education also greatly reduces the need to put up expensive and unattractive corridor fencing since we have verbally delivered the message. Instead, fencing is installed along the perimeter of the RMA with gates to control access and allow for restoration activities.

The RMA approach also allows us to focus patrols in these areas and strictly enforce the trails-only model. When damage does occur, the area is closed for rehabilitation.

The first RMA in the hills to be under this management model was SRI Loop. Rehabilitation and education efforts were conducted in 2010 and on January 8th, 2011, the area was reopened to the public. To date, no unauthorized trails have become established and all off-trail activity is rehabilitated quickly. In fact, trail assessments have shown the sustainable condition rating has doubled for trails in this area since the project was implemented. More single track trails are currently being planned for the SRI Loop RMA.

Cultural Resources

In the winter of 2009 a permanent California Archaeological Site Stewardship Program (CASSP) was established at Carnegie. In this program, trained volunteers work with professional archaeologists to protect the archaeological and historical resources by regularly visiting sites and recording changes. Currently, there are 11 CASSP volunteers bi-annually monitoring resources within Carnegie SVRA.

Several sites throughout the SVRA are either fenced or demarked with resource protection signs. Many of the prehistoric sites are fenced, as are portions of the Brickworks and Pottery Plant. One example is a buried historic brick feature near the Alameda Mine. This feature is located in a trail and is capped with soil. A CASSP volunteer monitors this site. When/if the brick feature is exposed, the volunteer informs the Division archaeologists who in turn inform park maintenance staff to reapply the cap. This has proven to be a successful mitigation that protects the resource and allows continuation of recreational activity.

On the Tesla property, where currently no OHV use is allowed, some sites have been vandalized by “pot hunters”. To address these impacts to the resources, the mining portals are closed and thus protected from vandals. A number of the archaeological resources in Tesla are still impacted. The SVRA has increased ranger patrols and monitoring of the site by park personnel. Public access, education, and CASSP volunteers may help deter those who currently trespass on the property. Archaeologists will be involved in future project planning and design to either completely eliminate or mitigate adverse effects to these valuable resources.

Commission Action

For Information only.